

A Church with a Missionary Heart - Acts 11:19-30, 12:24-25, 13:1-3
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Churches often have funny or bizarre names. Drive around on country roads and you will see some interesting names. If a church is named “Harmony” church, you can bet the church formed out of some kind of split from another church. One of the names you will find here and there are churches that have been named Antioch Church. In this case the name of the church comes from a very important church in the story of Acts. The city of Antioch was the third largest and one of the most important in the Roman Empire, sitting in Syria. It was founded around 300 BC as a key city in the Greek Empire, named after one of the early rulers in the Greek period. Eventually the Roman Empire conquered all that had existed in the Greek Empire and therefore Rome embraced this ancient metropolis as the Eastern Capital of their empire. It was a vastly diverse city with a strong mix of middle-eastern peoples, Greeks, and infiltrated with Romans. Antioch also had a significant population of Jewish people and had multiple synagogues. We are told in our story this week that the Gospel spread here as followers of Jesus fled here during the persecution initiated by Saul after Stephen’s murder. The church quickly grew and began influencing the city. Yet, it was how the church grew that caught the attention of the mother church in Jerusalem. And I believe part of Luke’s desire for us is to see a contrast between the Jerusalem church and the people of Christ in Antioch.

The story in Acts has been about the spread of the glorious Gospel of Jesus. This story started in Jerusalem with thousands coming to Jesus, and in Acts 2:42-47 we saw a description of the worship, community, generosity, and outreach of this first church. But I argued at that time that the description there was not just a description of the Jerusalem, it was also designed to be a picture of every church in Acts planted after this one, including Antioch. Yet, Jesus gave the church the Great Commission, the call to get outside their comfort zones and cultures and take the Gospel to all nations and all peoples. The Jerusalem church was content staying in that city and ministering only to people who were just like them. It took the terror of persecution to turn the mega church in Jerusalem into a sending church to the world. And even then, those who came to Antioch from Jerusalem chose to go only to Jewish people in that city. But those who had been reached in other cultures by the spread of the Gospel showed up in Antioch preaching Jesus to the Greek people, the non-Jews in the city. This became a game changer, because as the church was planted here we have the first diverse church, with members from both Jewish and Gentile ethnicities and religious backgrounds. In Acts, this is important because Luke is now showing us another aspect that becomes true of every church after it. As the story goes forward, every other church planted in the story by Paul and his crew are modeled after the church in Antioch, churches that will reflect the diversity of the city in which it is planted, made of Jewish and Gentile people. We don’t end up with two church plants in Antioch, a Jewish church for those who are part of that culture, and then a Greek church to minister to people with that heritage. And it is the willingness in their city to cross these cultural barriers that causes the church to have a missionary heart.

But this is also what made the Jerusalem church nervous. Yet, in God’s providence they sent Barnabas, the encourager, to be the person who checked in on the church in Antioch. Rather than pouring cold water on the fire that started, Barnabas’s arrival fueled the flames of awakening in the city and spurred it on to a missionary heart for the nations. The church ends up with a very diverse group of elders and preachers, and their impact on the city was known. We are told that the title “Christian” meaning belonging to or identifying with Christ was first given to believers in this town. In the First Century this title was not one chosen by believers, rather it was a term of derision intended to marginalize this church who

dared to love people who were different. Yet, it stuck, because this is exactly who they were. Imagine that, a city who tries to marginalize the church by telling them they are just like Jesus! The result is that this church becomes the most important missionary sending church in history. And it won't take persecution or a church split for them to become a sending church. They fast and pray for the salvation of the lost, and the Holy Spirit spoke. Imagine having Paul and Barnabas as Elders in your church. Most likely we would do all we can to keep them in our fold, making sure they can teach and lead us. Yet, the Spirit raised them up and Antioch willingly sends them on mission to the nations.

Antioch will continue to show up in the rest of Acts, as it will continue to be the sending church for all of Paul's missionary journeys. They support Paul and his team financially and give him a home base for seasons when he returns and needs a church to serve and minister to him. This church, with a huge heart for the mission of God both in their city and for the nations, what a beautiful picture for us. So while we are not named "Antioch Church", it is our desire to be a church that reflects the value it represents.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 Kings 20	1 Kings 21	1 Kings 22	2 Kings 1	2 Kings 2	2 Kings 3	2 Kings 4

Reading from this past week: Acts 11:19-30, 12:24-25, 13:1-3

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 13:4-52

Family Worship

Song - *Cling to Christ*

<https://youtu.be/0naB3Nb7boE>

Gospel Project

Unit: King David

Story: David sinned and was forgiven

Big Picture Question: What is grace?

Answer: Grace is when God gives us something good even when we do not deserve it.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 11-12

New City Catechism

Question #30: What is faith in Jesus?

Answer: Receiving and resting on him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Verse: Galatians 2:20

Scripture

Acts 11:19-30, 12:24-25, 13:1-3

- What is the difference between the two groups of evangelists in Acts 11:19-20? What is this distinction seeking to communicate to us?
- What does this church's willingness to take a collection for those suffering in Jerusalem tell us about the heart of these people?
- If Paul and Barnabas were elders at Antioch, do you think we would let them leave on mission? Would we send them or try to keep them here?

Prayer

*Pray for the team of people who work to set up and break down for our gathering each week.

*Pray for the Legends neighborhood

*Pray that our church would have a missionary heart like the church in Antioch.